

MARIA CANTWELL
WASHINGTON



United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

March 20, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

I am writing in support of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's application to the FY2022 National Culvert Removal, Replacement, and Restoration Grant Program (Culvert Program) for the Hardy Creek Fish Passage Project.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe, in partnership with BNSF Railway, is applying for \$5 million in Culvert Program funding to remove an undersized 8-foot-wide box culvert originally installed in the early 1900s. The existing BNSF Railway crossing box culvert has been identified by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife as a complete barrier to fish passage. The crossing consists of a box culvert with a 1.18-meter water drop at the downstream end. The vertical drop and the high-velocity sheet flow spread over the flat concrete culvert floor blocks fish passage and the flow of sediment and wood to the downstream reaches of Hardy Creek, a Columbia River Gorge Tributary stream in Skamania County, Washington. Moreover, this crossing is between sections of the Pierce National Wildlife Refuge, which according to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is important habitat for salmon.

Once complete, the Hardy Creek Fish Passage Project will restore adult fish access with the placement of a 27.5-meter bridge span. The new 12-meter-wide channel will restore natural processes, increase fish access to thermal refuge habitat, increase climate resiliency, and restore salmonid access to spawning and rearing habitat to benefit several Columbia River populations of salmon and steelhead, including Endangered Species Act threatened populations of Lower Columbia chum salmon.

Thank you for your full and fair consideration of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's application.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator